

# The 'Flexible' Immigrant: Household strategies and the labour market

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# Overview

- Setting the stage – the ‘flexible’ immigrant
- Research methodology
- Constructing ‘flexibility’
  - ◆ Job-finding and re-skilling
  - ◆ Social and familial networks
  - ◆ Children’s futures
  - ◆ belonging and citizenship
- Conclusions - gender and policy implications



## The flexible immigrant and the 'absent' family

- Human capital discourse
- And the family?
- Household, gender and flexibility



# Research Methodology

- Longitudinal study: 5 years
- Cross-comparison of neighbourhoods
- Qualitative strategies
  - ◆ individual and shared experiences
  - ◆ participating households as 'ideal' immigrants

## Cases – four households

Household	Marcos (EV)	Khalili (TC)	Naidu (EV)	Lau (TC)
Country of origin	Philippines	Iran	India	Hong Kong
Arrival date	1997	1997	1996 on	1996
Highest Education	Engineer	Engineer BA	Masters degree	Bachelor degree
English fluency	Fluent	Fluent	Fluent	Some difficulties
Household type	Nuclear	Nuclear	Extended	Extended
No. in family	4	4	2-7	7-8

EV – East Vancouver TC - Tri-Cities



# Job-seeking and re-skilling

- Labour market conditions and constraints on flexibility
  - ◆ Increasingly polarized labour market in late 1990s economic restructuring
  - ◆ Racialized and gendered labour market inequalities
  - ◆ Immigrants – lack of recognition of credentials, de-skilling, unemployment, lack of access to good jobs
- Multiple job-seeking strategies and barriers
  - ◆ Individual strategies within broader household goals



# Social and familial networks

- Used variously over time
  - ◆ initial settlement
  - ◆ finding employment
  - ◆ attachment to place, 'belonging'
- Becoming citizens ... work, family life, places of 'belonging'



# Children's futures: immigration as a family affair

- Intertwining children's needs, occupational and training opportunities
- Community involvement, attachment to neighbourhood and 'belonging'





## Conclusions: the household and the constitution of 'flexibility'

- Flexibility of family support →